

# Thank you to all of our supporters

A huge thank you to all of the local businesses, schools, churches, mosques, community groups, and individuals who have supported us throughout the past year. Without your financial support, donations of food and other items, and fundraising efforts, we would not have been able to achieve what we've achieved.

In particular we'd like to thank the following:

## Grant Funders



## Business Partners



## Business Supporters

Handmade Bakery  
Yorkshire IT

KFC  
DBW Ltd

Nando's

## Community Supporters



All Hallows Parish Church  
Holy Trinity Church, Huddersfield  
Huddersfield Community Trust -  
National Citizenship Service

Berry Brow Methodist Church and  
Community Centre  
Huddersfield Lions  
Slaitwaite Methodist Church  
St Peters Parish Church  
St Lucius Church

Holme Valley Lions Club  
Holmfirth Women's Institute  
St Paul's Armitage Bridge

and a very special 'Thank You' to all of our volunteers, trustees, and committee members, for giving up their time.

# The Welcome Centre

food bank and more...



[thewelcomecentre.org](http://thewelcomecentre.org)

# The Welcome Centre Annual Report 2019

For the period 1 September 2018 to 31 August 2019

# Chief Executive's Welcome

2018 – 2019 has been another busy year for The Welcome Centre. We have yet again seen more and more families and individuals in our local community experiencing crises and needing our support, set against a backdrop of change and growth behind the scenes at our charity.

Change this year has come in the form of two longstanding and much-loved members of staff moving on to pastures new, and a new Centre Manager joining us at Lord Street. But that's not all; as well as staffing changes we've also had a change of warehouse premises, as our original warehouse was no longer big enough to sort and store the amount of food we give out each year. For a relatively small charity, that's a lot of change in a 12 month period, and we've worked extra hard to not only maintain our standards of service during this period, but to continue to grow and improve our service.

We have given out 14,159 crisis packs, 15% more than we gave out in the previous year. We have supported 4,258 people in our local community, including 1,328 children. And we have provided enough food in our food packs for 239,611 meals.

In addition to providing food packs and other practical support, we have continued to grow our Advocacy, Guidance and Support service, helping people to move beyond needing to visit the food bank. In the last year, more than 200 people have benefited from this extra support.

We have also run our Feeding Families Programme for the second successive year, working with 34 schools to provide 314 children with free food throughout the summer holidays. Of course, this wouldn't have been possible without the support of our community, who raised a staggering £17,000 to fund this work.

In acknowledgement of all of our hard work we received two accreditation awards, a Quality for Health Award recognising the high standards we maintain in delivering our service, and a Kirklees Volunteering Quality Award, recognising our good volunteering practices. We put a huge amount of effort into ensuring that we maintain high standards in all areas of our work, so we were thrilled to receive formal recognition for our efforts from not one but two accreditation providers.

As you can probably tell, a lot of work goes on behind the scenes to make the Centre a success, so in this year's annual report, we wanted to give you a chance to meet the team behind The Welcome Centre's work. We hope that this report will give you an insight into the work we do, the challenges we face, and the contribution we make to helping some of Huddersfield's most vulnerable people in their time of need.

All that's left for me to say is thank you to our dedicated team of volunteers, staff and trustees for their continued hard work to develop and improve the work of The Welcome Centre. And thank you to all of the individuals, community groups, and businesses in Huddersfield, that support our work throughout the year. Thank you all for your support so far, we could not do it without you.

**Ellie Coteau**  
Chief Executive



## Our Year At A Glance



## Behind The Scenes At The Food Bank

**We're here to support families and individuals in crisis in our community by providing essential items, and advocacy, guidance, and support. A great deal of work goes on behind the scenes at The Welcome Centre to make that happen.**

We have a very small staff team, supported by 100 volunteers. Our volunteers are at the heart of our charity, collecting donations, taking referrals, making food packs and greeting the people we support. Volunteers come from all walks of life to help at the Centre for a few hours each week, and together with our team of dedicated and experienced staff, they drive the Centre forward.

### How do people access the food bank?

People access our support through a referral system. More than 100 local agencies including other charities, statutory agencies, schools, and GP surgeries refer people to us for support. We use the information we receive from referrers to make bespoke packs, taking into account each person's family size, access to cooking facilities, dietary requirements, and cultural preferences. Clients can collect their packs from us anytime between 11am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.



## Meet our new Centre Manager at Lord Street

I'm Mike and I'm the new Centre Manager for Lord Street. I've joined the Centre after five years working in the charity sector, and I've had a brilliant start at The Welcome Centre. I've been blown away by how hard working and committed all of our volunteers and staff are. I've come to realise very quickly that no two days are the same here, and that the team here work tirelessly to ensure we provide the best possible service for the people we support.

My role is to oversee the food bank operation at our Lord Street premises. That means supervising a team of volunteers who take food bank referrals, make up packs of food and other essential items, and give out packs to clients in our reception. A lot goes on behind the scenes to make the food bank run smoothly; recruiting and training volunteers, making sure we follow proper food hygiene and health and safety procedures, and working with our Warehouse Manager to make sure we have the stock we need at Lord Street to fill our food packs. It's a busy, rewarding role, and one that I'm really enjoying so far.

I'm really excited to be able to contribute to the Centre's work, and helping to improve our service moving forward. Over the next few months, I'll be working with the team to look at ways we can improve the quality of our food bank services even further, and I look forward to sharing the results with you next year.



### Who uses the food bank?

Every food pack that we give out is gratefully received by an individual or family in crisis. There is no 'typical' food bank user. People find themselves in crisis for all sorts of reasons: job loss, debt and eviction, benefit issues, refugee and asylum seeker issues, homelessness, domestic violence, substance misuse, bereavement, and physical and mental health issues.

### What is in a food pack?

Every food pack is different. We tailor the content of our packs to meet individual needs, whether that's providing high energy convenience food for people who are homeless, or providing extra fresh fruit and vegetable supplies for people we know love to cook. As well as tinned and dried goods, we're able to provide people with fresh food including fruit and vegetables, milk and cheese, bread, and baked goods. Our food packs contain food for seven days. And we don't just provide food, we also provide other essentials, including toiletries, bedding, cleaning supplies, and basic kitchen equipment.

### Where does all the food come from?

Almost 90% of the food we give out is donated to us. Our collection bins situated in local supermarkets are filled with tinned and dried goods donated by individuals, and we receive regular food donations from community groups and businesses throughout the year. At Harvest we benefit from the generosity of schools and churches collecting on our behalf, and mosques and Muslim groups collect for us during Ramadan. These tinned and dried goods are supplemented by fresh food that we purchase. Even with so much generosity from the community, we don't always have enough of certain types of food. When this happens, we purchase the necessary food, so that people don't go short. More and more of our supporters now donate money rather than food, which gives us the freedom to buy the food items we're really short of when we need to.

## An update from our Warehouse Manager

**I joined The Welcome Centre team in 2016, when the Centre first needed to expand beyond our Lord Street premises.**



Since then I've looked after the warehouse, overseeing a team of volunteers, drivers who collect and transport stock and a volunteer team who sort all of our incoming stock donations, which are then stored at the warehouse until they're needed at Lord Street. A key part of my job is making sure the right stock is delivered to Lord Street when

it's needed, so we don't let our clients down. I'm supported at the warehouse by a great team of volunteers who are reliable, experienced, and a pleasure to work with.

**The busiest time for us at the warehouse is the end of each year – between Harvest and Christmas two thirds of our annual stock donations are given to us.**

By Christmas time last year, it was apparent that our first warehouse was no longer big enough for us. The growing quantities of stock we needed to be able to sort and store was just too much, and we knew we couldn't do another Christmas at that warehouse. At the beginning of this year, we started preparations to move to newer, larger premises. We were lucky enough to find a bigger warehouse almost next door to the one we were leaving behind. Over a busy couple of months, we transferred all of our stock to our new warehouse, and we officially 'moved in' at the beginning of summer 2019. Our new warehouse gives us much more space to safely sort and store all of the stock that we need to be able to give out 14,000 crisis packs each year – that's a lot of tins!



## An update from one of our volunteers, Helen Meads

**In preparing for my retirement, realising I wasn't yet completely clapped-out, I decided I could do some voluntary work.**



I chose The Welcome Centre because it is at the sharp end of need in our community. Immediately I began, I was impressed with how well The Welcome Centre is organised and the positive and helpful atmosphere among the staff and volunteers.

**I had made the right choice.**

I was going to be a telephone volunteer, but before volunteers are let loose on the telephone, we learn the ropes, that is, everything else that happens at the Centre's Lord Street building.

**Great care is needed to get everything right for the people we support and when I finally started on the phones, I was glad of my apprenticeship.**

There is no such thing as a typical shift on the phones. Some shifts can be so busy there's barely time to draw breath. Conversely, sometimes a shift can be very quiet. Most often it's something in between, with busy and quiet spells in the same shift. When a referral call comes in, the caller explains what the client's crisis is and we ask various questions to establish what is needed (and why) and enter it into the computer system. We ask the reasons in case we can offer further support, for example with budgeting.

The volunteering experience goes beyond what we do to help people in need. When the telephone team were recently all together for some training about the benefits system, I looked round the room at a sizeable group of committed people more or less my own age and thought:

**This is my tribe.**

On each shift, we see volunteers we work with regularly and we find out about each other's lives, we joke with each other and commiserate.

It's a rich and rewarding experience, which I would prefer not to be necessary in a wealthy country, but our government doesn't properly provide for the most vulnerable, so at The Welcome Centre we step into the breach.

## More than a food bank



Providing people in crisis with food and other essential items is just part of what we do. We also offer one to one Advocacy,

Guidance and Support, to help them get back on track in the long term.

## An update from our Advocacy, Guidance and Support Manager

I help people in lots of different ways. Our Advocacy, Guidance and Support service offers a safe space, a listening ear, and emotional support. Some people just need information and signposting; a quick chat and some of our guidance leaflets is enough to point them in the right direction. Some people need more support; help with budgeting, understanding and completing paperwork, or someone to advocate on their behalf with other organisations. And some people need specialist support that we can't provide ourselves, so we help them access the support they need from other agencies.



2019 has been a busy year for me, with lots of people needing one to one support. The main areas of support I've provided this year are help with budgeting, new tenancies, and challenging direct deductions from benefits.

Budgeting is a common issue faced by people visiting the food bank, so I spend a lot of time providing one to one budgeting advice. I help people to understand their incomings and outgoings, identify and apply for additional financial support they're entitled to, and identify any non-essential spending that they could reduce to save money. Often though, people have already cut right back by the time they visit the food bank, and the challenge they face isn't managing their money but simply not having enough money to live on after essential spending. Many of the people I help have less than £50 per week to live on, after rent and direct deductions.

What are direct deductions? Direct deductions are sums of money taken directly from someone's benefit payment to repay debts. A single person claiming Universal Credit can lose

## Tammy's Story

Tammy fled the family home because of the threat of domestic violence, and was placed in temporary accommodation by the council.

Tammy eventually reconciled with her partner and moved back into the family home. However, Tammy didn't realise that the temporary change of address when she was living away from the family home would result in her housing benefit being stopped and the threat of eviction for both her and her partner.

### How did we help?

We helped Tammy get advice from the Kirklees Benefit Advice Service, that resulted in her housing benefit being reinstated and backdated, and the threat of eviction being lifted.

up to 40% of their personal allowance each month in direct deductions, making it very difficult to budget. The amount taken in direct deductions can sometimes be negotiated, so I contact the Department for Work and Pensions (who take the deductions) to arrange for reductions in the amount deducted. Sadly though, many of the people I help are already in significant debt by the time they reach the food bank. For these people I make referrals to Citizen's Advice and Money Advice Unit so they can receive specialist debt advice, and for those that want to get a Debt Relief Order, we help them access the funds to cover the administrative fees.

Another important and growing area of work for me is helping people with the costs of moving into new tenancies. Lots of the people I work with are moving into new properties that are completely bare and unfurnished; concrete flooring, no bed, no sofa, no cooker or fridge. I help them access basic furniture to make their house feel more like a home. This can mean the difference between someone staying in a property or returning to a life on the streets. Over the last 12 months, I've secured 174 grants for people to buy essential items of furniture for new tenancies.



## Donations of time, money and food

The Welcome Centre depends on the support of our community – without the donations of money and food that we receive from community groups, businesses, churches, schools and mosques, we couldn't do what we do.

### Regular giving

"I'm incredibly proud to have a charity like The Welcome Centre in my community, and am happy to support the organisation with a monthly donation. Like many people, I want to help but don't necessarily have time to volunteer, but I know that I'm doing my bit every month and that my ongoing monthly donations all add up!"

Abi Smith, **monthly supporter**

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Last year we gave out £262,035 worth of food



## An update from our Fundraising Manager

**Working as Fundraising Manager at The Welcome Centre is never dull, and these last 12 months have brought many challenges. As demand for the food bank goes up, so do my goals to raise awareness and donations for our cause, so we can continue to help those in need.**

I realised some time ago that to spread the word about The Welcome Centre's great work, I needed to improve our website. At the end of last year, after several months of hard work, and many new skills learned, the new website was finally launched. Not only has it helped to generate much needed donations, but it's a great tool to showcase our work and the reason why we all work so hard at The Welcome Centre. The website is also a great place for us to share our good news stories, share client case studies and thank our partners such as Stafflex, Sheards Accountants and Huddersfield Sales and Lettings, for their support.

I'm really proud of how much success I've had in raising the profile of The Welcome Centre in our community. Breaking down the stigma of food banks and persuading local businesses to support us has been a challenge over the years. But through our social media campaigns, local press and TV coverage, and our

website, more businesses are choosing to support our work. Lots of new businesses have got involved with The Welcome Centre this year, but I've still got lots more work to do to convince other businesses that even though we may be a small food bank, we're making a huge difference to people's lives. Lots of the businesses that donate money to us also donate time; their employees come to volunteer with us at busy periods like Christmas and Harvest, which makes a huge difference to us.

Community support for The Welcome Centre continues to be fantastic. A great example of this is Marshfest, a family friendly festival for a fiver, organised annually by a group of our supporters. The event is a great example of our community coming together to support us, from the organisers, to the bands who play for free, to the people who attend, to the businesses who sponsor the event, Syngenta, Magic Rock, Camel Club and Marsh Design, to name just a few. Our 2019 Marshfest was our best Marshfest yet; we had great attendance and raised more than £6,500 for The Welcome Centre. That's enough money for us to provide more than 7,000 meals!

## Business Supporters

Working with national supermarkets to reduce their food waste has been on our radar for several years. This year I've signed up Aldi in Huddersfield, which means the food bank receives their surplus fruit, veg, bakery items, and any stock that is partially damaged. They offered us a daily collection, however this was proving a challenge to cover through our volunteer drivers. Local firm **Diamond Logistics** who helped us with our warehouse had previously offered us more support. I contacted them to see if they could help. They now collect from **Aldi** on our behalf every day and deliver the produce straight to us.

Our work with these two businesses not only reduces food waste but also enables us to give out more fresh produce in food packs.

